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THE BENEVOLENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT,

A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE

TRON CHURCH OF EDINBURGH,

MAY 31. 1791.

BEFORE THE SOCIETY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE SONS OF THE CLERGY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

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Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the General Meeting of the Society and Subſcribers.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

AN ACCOUNT

OF THE

OBJECTS AND CONSTITUTION OF THE SOCIETY.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Sermon was prepared for the Pulpit, without any view to publication.

The requeſt of the general meeting that it ſhould be printed, was readily agreed to by the Author, under the idea, that the expoſition which it contains of the leading principles on which the Society has been formed, might be of ſome uſe to an inſtitution, in which, as the Son of a Clergyman, he is warmly intereſted.

The Public has a right to full information concerning any ſcheme in which its countenance is expected. A particular detail of the views and conſtitution of the Society, which could not with propriety be introduced into the Sermon, is ſtated in the annexed paper: And there is reaſon to believe, that, every explanation which can be given on this ſubject, will tend to confirm thoſe ſentiments of approbation, which have already been generally expreſſed, of a plan for the benefit of the Sons of the Clergy of Scotland.

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SERMON, &c.

ACTS XX. 35.

——AND TO REMEMBER THE WORDS OF THE LORD JESUS, HOW HE SAID, "IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE "THAN TO RECEIVE."

IN the close of a very solemn and affecting charge to the elders of the church at Ephesus, the apostle Paul earnestly recommended these words of the Lord Jesus to the attention of his friends from whom he was now about to depart, and who were to see his face no more. They are a precious fragment of those sayings of our Saviour,

which have not been recorded in any of the four goſpels: For many other things Jeſus did and ſaid, in the courſe of his miniſtry, beſides what are contained in thoſe books; it being impoſſible, as John has obſerved, to write down the whole.

The ſaying which has been thus incidentally recovered, contains a ſentiment rich in beauty and truth, and diſplays the ſame ſpirit which ſhone in all the life and doctrine of the Prince of peace. It relates to his favourite ſubject, on which he beſtowed unwearied attention.

The moſt difficult part of our Lord's undertaking, in his prophetical office, as a moral teacher, was to break the inordinate power of a worldly and ſelfiſh diſpoſition in mankind. This diſpoſition was the principle, which, from the firſt appearance of the goſpel raiſed itſelf in hoſtility againſt its progreſs; and which formed the character of diſcrimination between the children of wrath and the heirs of mercy, in that ſeaſon, when the Meſſiah was "ſet, for the fall, and for the riſing, of many in Iſrael." The great

great body of the Jewiſh nation, enſlaved to worldly and ſelfiſh paſſions, rejected an inſtitute which was not accommodated to their wiſhes; and were loſt, becauſe they proved themſelves unworthy of the kingdom of heaven, and put it from them. The early diſciples on the contrary, renouncing every ſelfiſh view, entered the ſervice under the full knowledge of its terms; and gave up their intereſt, their eaſe, and their ſafety, from public affections, in the cauſe of virtue and of mankind. Thus in the wiſdom of God, matters were ſo adjuſted at the introduction of the goſpel, that every inſtance of converſion became a viſible effect of its power to overcome the world; and the very profeſſion of Chriſtianity, under the peril of the times, was the proof of a diſintereſted ſpirit, which, preferring duty to temporal poſſeſſions, was prepared to do good at the expence of ſufferings, and was more ready to give than to receive.

The introduction of Chriſtianity under a character ſo proved, and in a ſhape ſo unqueſtionable, was of infinite advantage, to confirm

confirm, and to ſeal to future times, the high morality of the diſpenſation itſelf: a diſpenſation, in which the Son of God laboured to exalt the ſouls of men, above the intereſts of the moment, to the concerns of an eternal exiſtence; and to expand their hearts, to the whole family of the Father of goodneſs.

The *duty* of Chriſtians in conforming to a principle to which the Lord Jeſus bent his moſt earneſt attention, is ſufficiently clear, and muſt be inſtantly acknowledged; but that our public affections ſhould yield more real ſatisfaction to our own minds, than thoſe attentions however ſucceſsful, by which we advance our temporal intereſt; that it ſhould be more *bleſſed* to give than to receive, may ſeem hardly credible to thoſe who have not experimentally made proof of the caſe. Many of the obſervations of the Lord Jeſus ſeemed paradoxes to the world when they were firſt propounded. When he ſpake of the happineſs of the mourners, of the poor, of the perſecuted, the multitude were aſtoniſhed

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at his doctrine: Yet his followers feel in their ſouls the truth of his aſſurances, and give thanks to God from the depth of their afflictions. In like manner the obſervation in the text, which declares the happineſs of beneficence above acquiſitions of gain, is juſtified in the experience of all the ſons of compaſſion.

The ſupreme attention which our Saviour ſhewed to ſupport the intereſts of goodneſs, leads us to conſider as a general principle,

" That the ſpirit of the goſpel of Chriſt
" is a ſpirit of active benevolence."

This principle I now propoſe to illuſtrate.

It is of great importance in the Chriſtian life to know clearly the ſtandard to which we are called in the goſpel. In a diſpenſation to creatures who in many things offend, and who are perpetually expoſed to temptation and danger of new offence

fence, it was neceſſary that the firſt call ſhould be to repentance; to the renunciation of actual evil, and the recovery and preſervation of the principle of an harmleſs life. The goſpel therefore, in its moral department, is ſeen primarily to rear on its ſolid foundations the ſpotleſs integrity of the whole man. We are in no caſe to do an injury to any of the human race. Be the object which we might wiſh to gain ever ſo deſirable, be the party who might ſuffer ever ſo worthleſs, be the injury ever ſo ſlight, be it unknown to all the world, and even to the perſon who bears it; the law of Chriſtianity is inflexible, wrong is not to be done. There can be no excuſe for wrong before the conſcience of a Chriſtian. Would he plead his intereſt? He is miſtaken: Virtue is more his intereſt than any outward acquiſition can be. Would he plead his paſſions? He ought to govern *them*; for if they lead him in the face of principle, this alſo is his fault inſtead of his excuſe. Would he think of the advantage of his family? Let him ſeek for them the friend-

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ſhip of God, and not the wages of unrighteouſneſs. Would he urge ſuch topics as the practice of other men, or the intereſts of his party, and political connections? It is to no purpoſe, and conſcience will tell him ſo: He is not to follow a multitude to do evil; and as to his party, if it cannot be better ſupported than by the rotten props of injuſtice, of falſehood, of treachery, of oppreſſion, let it go down to the duſt as it ought.

The Chriſtian law requires at all events, unalterable integrity, and ſacred innocence in heart and manners. But does it not require more than this? When a man has attained this degree of practical religion which conſiſts in juſtice, fidelity, and truth, and is firmly eſtabliſhed in his heart as an honeſt man, he is certainly entitled to reſpect and confidence: but upon the principles of the Chriſtian law he is not as yet thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works. He has not yet earned either the full approbation of his own heart, or the entire and affectionate reverence of thoſe who know him well. Scarcely for ſuch a man will

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one die. His character, let it be drawn by his moſt intimate and moſt diſcerning acquaintance, muſt be made up of negative deſcription: he doth not defraud, he doth not deceive, he doth not betray, he doth not oppreſs. Thus far it is right; he is unoffending, he is free from blame; and that is all. But the Prince of the moral world has not here placed the laſt bounds of obligation, nor ſummed up the glories of his kingdom. The principles of the doctrine of Chriſt being thus laid, on the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, the ſacred edifice is ſtill to be reared, and carried progreſſively to its perfection by active virtue.

The ſpirit of the goſpel of Jeſus in this regard, may be collected from his own words, and thoſe of his apoſtles; from his conduct, and theirs which was formed upon his model; and from the principles and practice of the early Chriſtians.

By the doctrine of the great Maſter himſelf, it is not left optional to us whether we under the Chriſtian diſcipline ſhall thus employ

employ our cares in active goodneſs or not, as the impulſe of occaſion may prompt us; but beneficence is formed into a duty of direct obligation, and we are made reſponſible on this ground before the tribunal of God. The Son of man has expreſsly announced to his followers, that when he ſhall come in his kingdom, and all the holy angels with him, the laſt deciſion ſhall be founded on the expreſſions of attachment to him which men have made by their good deeds; ſuch as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, viſiting the ſick, and the priſoners, protecting the friendleſs and the ſtranger: for he is the head of the family of affliction, and the victim of the covenant of mercy: "In as much," ſaith he, "as ye have done it to one of "the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye did it "unto me."

The Lord Jeſus endeavoured to bring men to goodneſs through the medium of inclination, as well as through the ſenſe of duty; thus carrying higher his improvement of the morality of the world. "One

"is your Father, who is in heaven, and "all ye are brethren." "This is my "commandment, the new commandment "which I give unto you, that ye *love* "one another, even as I have loved "you. By this ſhall all men know that "you are my diſciples." "When thou "makeſt a feaſt, call the poor, the maim-"ed, the lame, the blind; and thou "ſhalt be bleſſed, for they cannot recom-"penſe thee: but thou ſhalt be recompen-"ſed at the reſurrection of the juſt." The earneſt prayer of the Lord Jeſus, in the night on which he was betrayed, regarded the union of Chriſtians in that ſacred attachment which is the immediate ſpring of beneficence: "I pray for them alſo "which ſhall believe on me through their "word; that they all may be one, as thou "Father art in me, and I in thee; that "they alſo may be one in us: that the "world may believe that thou haſt ſent "me: and the glory which thou gaveſt "me, I have given them; that they may "be one, even as we are one."

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The writings of the apoſtles are full of the moſt earneſt exhortations in the ſame ſpirit. Theſe faithful miniſters of the word of life, pleaded with mankind the cauſe of goodneſs, from our new relations, as allied to one another in the family of the Lord Jeſus, who gathereth to himſelf all in one; and who makes his ſpirit, his faith, and his baptiſm, the principles of union and charity to the human race.

Thus the apoſtles laboured as their Maſter had done, not only to recommend the works of beneficence from the ſenſe of duty, but to gain the hearts of Chriſtians to the law of love, that ſo affection might become the guardian of principle. This is the very definition and character of ſubſtantial virtue, when inclination coaleſces with law; when the heart is taught to plead on the ſide of conſcience; and when the Chriſtian can ſay with the great High Prieſt of the moral world. "I delight to "do thy will O God."

The actions of our Saviour and of his early followers gave teſtimony to the ſame principles.

principles. The whole miniſtry of the Lord Jeſus was an uninterrupted exerciſe of goodneſs: this was his great object and delight in life, and his conſolation in the gates of death. His apoſtles treading in his ſteps, and animated by his ſpirit, were devoted, in the cauſe of the human race; and reckoned all labours and ſufferings but light in reclaiming the world to virtue and to their eternal Friend. The members of the early church, trained by theſe men, and formed to the beauties of holineſs as from the womb of the morning, were a peculiar people, diſtinguiſhed from the unbelieving world, not only by their faith, but by zeal in good works, by brotherly kindneſs, by charity as the bond of perfection: The active principles of this higher morality being felt by them as the new commandment itſelf, the ſoul of the great cauſe, and the very character and glory of their profeſſion.

In modern times, when by the bleſſing of God, Chriſtianity is not the ſeparate faith of a ſmall party in the midſt of an heathen

heathen empire, but the avowed and public religion of many nations in the moſt enlightened quarters of the globe, its eſſential ſpirit is ſeen working on a broad ſcale, and at leaſt with correſpondent effects, if not with equal fervour. In thoſe nations where the ſcriptures are left moſt open to the people at large, and the principles of Chriſtianity beſt underſtood, the works of goodneſs are of courſe moſt abundant; and in that progreſs of religious improvement, which it is eaſy to diſcover as now advancing in our own and other nations, the higher morality, the active benevolence of the Chriſtian character will more and more increaſe, keeping pace with religious knowledge, and with the manifeſtation of all the other characters of thoſe better and happier times to which human affairs are tending.

Confining our attention at preſent to our own country, and our own times, let us conſider the effects of the Chriſtian ſpirit in prompting to works of goodneſs. Theſe works are of two kinds; private

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and public. Of the former, from their very character, little can be here ſtated: they are known in the good treaſure of the hearts of the ſervants of Chriſt; and they are known to God who bleſſes the performers. The principle of goodneſs delights to be clothed in the garb of modeſty and reſerve: it is thus that the Lord of compaſſions taught his friends to array it: and the ſecrecy of good actions is made to enhance the bleſſedneſs which they yield, as it is the pledge to the conſcience that the motive is pure. For the ſtate of private benevolence, therefore, my brethren, ſhall I ſay you muſt look narrowly into thoſe walks of life where its cautious ſteps may at times be traced, or where the accents of bleſſing may be heard as they are going up to God from the houſe of affliction? May I not rather bid you look inwards, to the ſacred recollection of thoſe things which have miniſtered delight to your own hearts? Many of you have dealt your bread to the hungry, and have given with a full hand: Have you not

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gone with comforts to the retreat of the mourners? Have ye not ſheltered the orphan from the tempeſts of the world, and brought forward the young into the ſcene of uſeful employment? Hath not your bounty ſoothed and gladdened the heart of age? I hope and truſt in our Lord Jeſus that many who now hear me will be able in his great day to lift up their heads with joy when this account ſhall be required.

It is a matter of certainty to every diligent obſerver of the ſtate of morality in this country, that real beneficence is in a proſperous ſtate among us; and that its operations have been extended with the growing opulence of the people. Much good is done, much effectual comfort is adminiſtered, much miſery is obviated or mitigated by the bounty of individuals. May theſe true characters of the religion of mercy more and more abound! It is impoſſible to eſtimate completely the ſtate of practical religion in the land: it is known only to God.

God. But there is great reaſon to believe, that it is much higher in its actual amount, than appears from any general obſervation of the more prominent features of ſociety. The alms and the prayers which come in memorial before God, aſcend from many quarters which are little ſuſpected or known of men.

But beſides the ſecret treaſures which a generous heart diſcovereth not to mankind, there are public works of goodneſs, which, without any breach of the modeſty of the ſpirit, are performed before the world as acts of ſocial bounty; by which, Chriſtians, according to another direction of their Lord, give their avowed countenance to virtue; and let their light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee their good works. Theſe public and exemplary actions, poſſeſs the ſame conſiſtency in principle, with the alms which are performed in ſecret, as congregational worſhip bears to the devotions of the cloſet. And there can be no argument againſt public bounty drawn from the characters of

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reſerve, aſſigned to alms in their ordinary exerciſe, which would not equally conclude againſt public devotion, contraſted with the characters aſcribed to prayer. The public and the private duties in both caſes, if alike abſtracted from any motives of oſtentation, are but different ſpecies from the ſame principle, are entirely conſiſtent, and even mutually ſupport each other.

The idea of public charitable inſtitutions is peculiar to Chriſtians, and is to be ranked among the viſible proofs of the beneficent tendency of our religion. Theſe inſtitutions were found among the Chriſtians, even amidſt all the darkneſs of the Popiſh ages. They were often miſapplied indeed, and perverted to the purpoſes of ſuperſtition, as every thing elſe was: but their ſubſiſtence in any form, under all the intellectual darkneſs of the times, is a proof, that the idea itſelf is obviouſly attached to the ſtrong and indelible features of the Chriſtian ſcheme.

In the reformed and enlightened ages, which we the Chriſtians of the Weſt have

now enjoyed, by the grace of God, the ideas of permanent charitable inſtitutions have been at once purified and extended; and have flouriſhed in proportion as they have been brought to the ſtandard of ſound wiſdom, which is the proper ally and tutor of compaſſion.

In our own country, the genius, as well as the hearts of men, has been exerted with ſignal ability and ſucceſs, in deviſing various modes of doing good to thoſe who ſtand in need of the aids of benevolence. Conſider the ornaments of this our city: They are not the melancholy edifices which ſuperſtition has reared to monkery and conventual indolence; they are the public tokens of genuine Chriſtianity in the land. On one ſide there are palaces, erected and endowed by individuals, for the ſupport and for the liberal and virtuous education of numbers of our youth, whom their parents, from poverty and misfortunes, are unable to bring forward into thoſe creditable ranks which themſelves have filled. —On the other ſide, there has ariſen from the

the gradual contributions of the public at large, an hoſpitable aſylum, for the fatherleſs child, the orphan who had none to help him; where he is fed, and clothed, and protected; and where education, and the habits of uſeful employment, are infuſed and completed together; and from whence, as from a well ordered nurſery of the community, the more laborious profeſſions of life are perpetually recruited by youth of both ſexes already trained to virtuous induſtry. —In another quarter, we obſerve a ſpacious and commodious edifice fitted up to be the refuge of the diſeaſed; where at all times are to be ſeen hundreds who muſt otherways have ſunk under the combined preſſure of poverty and bodily diſtreſs; but who here are nurſed and tended with more than friendly care; and freely obtain all the aids of medicine in the higheſt perfection to which the art has been carried in Europe.

But our works of public bounty are many, beſides thoſe of which our very buildings ſerve to remind us. In each of the different

rent ſocieties and corporations into which the people are claſſed, there is generally a public ſtock ſacredly appropriated to the ſupply of the needy and unfortunate.

There is an ingenuity attending men whoſe hearts are zealous of good works, which enables them to diſcover new methods in which good may be done moſt effectually both to individuals and to ſociety. It occurred to our fathers, that in the northern and mountainous provinces of this kingdom, and in the iſlands on our Atlantic coaſt, the poverty of the country left the youth deprived of the means of education. A ſociety was formed for the propagation of Chriſtian knowledge, and found inſtruction in thoſe regions: The bleſſing of God has attended the inſtitution; the fund has grown beyond all probability and expectation; and from this fund, ſchools under proper teachers are every where flouriſhing amidſt the wilds of the north and weſt.——By theſe eſtabliſhments, ſeconded by the annual donation of our gracious Sovereign, which is appropriated to

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miſſionary miniſters of the goſpel, infinite advantages reſult to the people of thoſe regions, who are thus awakened into civilization; and eſſential benefit is at the ſame time derived to the kingdom at large.

The forms of public bounty among us are too numerous to be ſpecified here in detail: And I have not been afraid to turn your thoughts on this occaſion to what has been already done, under different ſchemes of beneficence; well knowing that they who have often applied their hearts and their hands to works of goodneſs are more ready to act thus yet again, than they who have never taſted how bleſſed it is.—This fact, which is a matter of experience, is a proof of the doctrine in our text: There is a happineſs in good works, ariſing from ſources which mere ſelf-intereſt knoweth not: From the immediate delight which the God of nature has attached to generous actions, from the conſcioufneſs of having done our duty, and from the impreſſion of conformity to Jeſus our exalted pattern of mercy.—The effects are general: By pub-

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lic ſchemes of beneficence the ſtock of human happineſs is increaſed; the complacency which they produce, extends thro' a wide range beyond the circle both of the givers and receivers: When the eye ſees them it bleſſes them; they are contemplated with delight by all good men, who view them as the faireſt pledges of the dignity of human nature, and of the proſperity of Chriſtianity in the world.

I have already obſerved, that men of generous hearts are ingenious in diſcovering new and various modes of doing good. It is to be added, that there is alſo an oeconomy in benevolence, conſiſtent with its moſt liberal features, and favourable to its moſt ample and ſucceſsful gratification. This conſiſts chiefly in ſuch a judicious ſelection of the objects of aid, as that the benefits may be rendered productive, and that the eſſential value of the gifts in their application may exceed the original coſt: Like the bread which the Son of man brake in the deſert, and diſtributed to the fainting multitude,

multitude, which grew among their hands, till they all did eat and were filled.

In this department of oeconomical benevolence, are to be reckoned the good offices and pecuniary aids, by which young perſons are enabled to acquire the profeſſional qualifications which may fit them in due time to riſe by their induſtry to independence; and as they ſo riſe, may be able to draw after them others of their kindred, and to reflect their comforts on all their fathers' families.

If, therefore, in exploring the various modes in which good may done, and the doctrine of our Maſter adorned, we ſhould diſcover a particular deſcription of families, ſtationed ſeparately by the very conſtitution of the country, in the various diſtricts of the kingdom; and many of them of courſe living remote from the ſeats of learning and of buſineſs: If the heads of ſuch families, are men whoſe minds are enlightened by liberal ſcience, and whoſe morals are pledged in the very characters of their profeſſion: If they are men who avowedly

dedicate

dedicate their time and talents to the moſt important intereſts of the human race: If the revenue which they derive from the public, is in moſt caſes confeſſedly inadequate to the exigencies of family expence in the preſent ſtate of this country: If, both according to their own feelings, and the public opinion, they are precluded by a decorum of character, from thoſe ſecular engagements which are the reſources of other men; benevolent minds will feel a claim in their behalf ſo ſtrong, that the public will ſeem to be indebted, and its aid to be but its juſtice.

By men of the deſcription now ſtated, much prudent attention will be requiſite, to procure a regular ſupply of even the more ordinary comforts of life. But there is a period of expence in the caſe of a riſing family, which many individuals among them muſt be wholly unprepared to meet. The certain proſpect of this period as approaching muſt fill their minds with much anxious thought; and with each revolving ſeaſon, which brings it nearer, the weight

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of care will be felt with increaſing preſſure. The period to which I allude, is that in which a profeſſional education becomes neceſſary for their ſons: when they have arrived at that critical time of life, in which the loſs even of a few ſeaſons is irreparable, and in which a parſimonious abridgement of the means of improvement, will be deplored in all the years of life. Yet is it not to theſe young men that their fathers would fondly look, as the props of their age, or as the comforts and protectors of, perhaps, their widowed mothers and dependent ſiſters? In every ſuch caſe, an abſolute inability in the parent to lead forward his ſons, and to ſecond their ardour for improvement in the years of deciſion, muſt bow down his heart in ſecret. And if, as may frequently happen, the father himſelf during this period, or in its near approach, feels the warnings of his own diſſolution, the thoughts of his helpleſs family, and the viſible preclusion of his ſons from even the proſpect of ever reſtoring plenty and comfort to the reſt, will

they not deepen the gloom of his declining days, and ſtrew with thorns his death-bed pillow?

In viewing the families of men ſuch as we have deſcribed, the eye of benevolent attention will reſt a little on the ſons themſelves. They have been educated hitherto by men of enlightened minds, with anxious cares, and under many prayers to heaven: They have been trained from their infant years in religion, in virtue, and in honour: Their young ſpirits are emulous to excel in what is laudable, and to acquire ſome ſituation in ſociety, in which talents and induſtry may open the path to ſucceſs. Would ſome friends ſtep forward now, to lead them on from the ſtage where their father muſt ſtop, or to aid and conduct them in part when the parents can go yet a little farther, but cannot go on alone: Might not much ſuffering be obviated? might not the cares of many worthy men be aſſuaged? might not many promiſing youths be brought forward into ſituations which they would fill with honour to themſelves,

and

and with advantage to this country in its eſſential intereſts; and all this by an oeconomical beneficence in which the benefits accruing to the young men themſelves, and to their neareſt connections, might exceed an hundred fold the expence of the gifts?

Your thoughts have now readily accompanied mine to the families of many of the miniſters of the church of Scotland. The ſons of the clergy have hitherto juſtified what has been ſuggeſted of the intereſt of the ſociety at large, in giving its encouragement to this deſcription of our youth. In various ſecular profeſſions, the ſons of clergymen appear at this day with a reſpect and conſequence which they have earned by their perſonal merit. In the eccleſiaſtical department, this country has ſeen the honours of its church ſuſtained and advanced, by regular ſupplies of men who have been trained almoſt from their cradles to the ideas and principles of the profeſſion of their fathers.——While the ſucceſs of each individual of this deſcription, whether in

civil

civil or clerical employments, has been in fact the acquiſition of proviſion, protection, and a home to the other branches of his father's houſe.

That ſuch young men may ſtill come forward, and obtain their ſhare in the more creditable ſituations of life, is earneſtly to be deſired. But there are difficulties in their way which have been gradually increaſing: Theſe flow from the great fall in the relative value of the livings of the Scottiſh clergy, and the enhanced expence attending the moſt moderate domeſtic eſtabliſhment which is conſiſtent with their character and office. Theſe difficulties are now become ſuch, as muſt in many caſes, actually exclude the youth from any liberal profeſſional qualification, and leave the gayeſt bloſſoms of genius to be chilled and blaſted in the ſpring of life.

To obviate theſe evils, the Society for the Benefit of the Sons of the Clergy has been eſtabliſhed: Their object is to open a channel for the liberality of the public, that it may flow in this direction. They are forming a permanent fund, by means

of

of ſubſcriptions, donations, bequeſts, or any form of bounty; from the revenue of which, the youth are to be aided in their literary or profeſſional purſuits. Their plan is not limited to thoſe who look forward to any peculiar line of employment; neither is it confined to any particular part of this country, but embraces impartially the whole provinces of Scotland. They mean to diſcriminate only according to the exigencies of families, and the circumſtances of particular caſes. From the aſſociation of a number of reſpectable men in the intereſt of the ſons of the clergy, there is reaſon to hope, that other advantages in the road of early life, beſides ſuch as are merely pecuniary may be conveyed to this order of our youth.

The conſtitution of the ſociety has been formed with deliberate attention, with no other views than that the greateſt poſible good may be done, and that the leaſt miſapplication may be prevented, as effectually as human affairs admit. In every part of its arrangement, the moſt

ſtudied

ſtudied precautions are taken, for ſecuring the continuance of a pure and regular adminiſtration, after all of us the original members ſhall be gathered to our fathers.

From the firſt moment of the inſtitution of the ſociety to this day, its ſtock has been gradually riſing, in a regular progreſs; to the great ſatisfaction of all concerned; as this circumſtance is both the moſt ſubſtantial proof of the general approbation with which the public view its principle, and affords the fair proſpect of its actual and extenſive ſucceſs.

When it is conſidered, that ſome of the greateſt and moſt proſperous funds of bounty in this country, have ariſen from ſuch beginnings as this ſcheme has had, the friends of the ſons of the clergy feel the moſt lively encouragement in the proſpect before them: They look forward to a time, when they may be able, through the bleſſing of God, and the liberality of his ſervants, to do more for the families of miniſters than they have yet ventured to promiſe;

promiſe; they have expreſſed a reſervation of a deliberative power, when the increaſe of their capital ſhall render its exerciſe prudent, in favour of daughters of clergymen, that they alſo in the years of youth, may be aided, in acquiring the neceſſary qualifications for uſeful employments, and in their introduction to buſineſs.

I have thus laid before you the neceſſary information relative to this ſociety.

By works of goodneſs, as far as Providence gives us opportunity, let us improve this ſeaſon of our diſcipline for a better world; and lay up our treaſures in heaven. And may the kind Father of us all, who giveth us his ſpirit in the goſpel, bleſs us with his image in our hearts.

FINIS.

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